

Testimony of the New York City Coalition of Domestic Violence Residential Providers before the Senate Standing Committee on Social Services and the Senate Standing Committee on Housing, Construction and Community Development

The New York City Coalition of Domestic Violence Residential Providers represents all 18 non-profit agencies receiving New York City funds to provide specialized shelter to domestic violence survivors. We thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony about this critical issue.

As you are aware, in December of 2009, the New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) withdrew 2,600 pending Section 8 Housing vouchers and stopped issuing new vouchers. Many of these vouchers had been given to families who were timing out of New York City's Advantage Programs, a two year rental subsidy for formerly homeless families including those with active Child Welfare cases and those in which at least one member is permanently disabled. Approximately 500 of these vouchers had been given to victims of domestic violence who had experienced abuse severe enough to meet NYCHA's stringent requirements for obtaining a Domestic Violence Priority. Additional vouchers were in the hands of youth aging out of foster care and intimidated witnesses.

While advocates understand that the Federal government imposes a cap on the number of participants in the Section 8 program, we also feel that the City has a moral responsibility to fulfill its implied promise of permanent housing assistance to those families who received vouchers.

Additionally, there has been discussion by NYCHA of the possibility that vouchers will need to be taken away from approximately 10,000 families already housed and receiving the Section 8 subsidy. In addition to the emotional devastation, it would also likely result in these families being forced to enter the City's already overburdened homeless shelter system.

This consideration of the removal of existing, active subsidies is due to pressure on NYCHA to balance its budget. Some of this pressure comes from the Federal Government. Ironically, NYCHA would be able to balance their budget without rescinding subsidies had the Federal government not taken away 58 million dollars from NYCHA's reserve account and reallocated it to other states.

We urge the Senate to do whatever possible to aid NYCHA in its efforts to obtain additional funding from HUD and to provide additional funding from the State in order to prevent thousands of vulnerable New Yorkers from becoming homeless.